Retelling Hindu Mythology: A Study of Motifs and Techniques in the Selected Works of Devdutt Pattanaik and Amish Tripathi

Synopsis

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Mythology is deeply valued stories that explain the existence of society and world order. Such narratives of the creation of society, their origins, and their foundations are called mythology. Mythology also embodies the stories about the gods and heroes of the past of a religious community and their connection to the divine. Thus, the narratives about the gods and goddesses vis-à-vis man continue even after the death of heroes and heroines come under the mythology. The term "myth" generally refers to a traditional story, but some scholars limit it to sacred narratives. In his book *The Texture of Culture* (2012), Aleksei Semenenko mentions that the beauty of myths lies in the fact that “they do not belong exclusively to the past and archaic cultures but constitute an essential part of modern culture as well” (40). Thus, the definition of myth in contemporary times has become vague, loose, and broad as myth operates universally and diversely.

In Greek, *muthos,* from which the English word *myth* has been derived, meant "story or narrative." Mythology lacks a consistent and uniform structure, with the same myth often manifesting in multiple versions and varying across diverse regional and socio-religious practices. Many of the legends evolve across these mythical texts, where the names of the characters change or the story is inflated with greater details. Myths evade fix definitions and are beyond orderly classification because of the obscurity of its origin and the ambiguity of its meaning. Hence, myths are practically beyond analysis and scrutiny because of their diversity. A. Joseph Dorairaj in *Myth and Literature* (2003) states,

> Myths are uncanny phenomena. They are at once regional and yet universal; static and yet dynamic; stable and yet protean; archaic and yet contemporary; profligate and yet hallowed; fantastic and yet highly structured; divine and yet human in that they are as much about gods and goddesses as about human beings. Though they belong to a pre-literate and pre-historical era, they keep recurring in all ages and are a part of our contemporary society. Though they belong to the realm of primitive religion and come under the purview of anthropologists, folklorists, and phenomenologists of religion, they are an integral part of literature and other arts. (09)

According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, mythology can be considered a type of language. By examining mythology as a language, he suggests that it can be studied in a similar manner to how language is studied. He clarifies that Myth operates as a form of language that operates on a heightened level, where significance effectively "takes flight" from the linguistic foundation upon which it

continually develops. In his book *Myth and Meaning* (1978), he describes:

> Mythical stories are, or seem, arbitrary, meaningless, and absurd, yet nevertheless, they seem to re-appear all over the world. A 'fanciful' creation of the mind in one place would be unique – you would not find the same creation in a completely different place. (8-9)

David Mikics in *A New Handbook of Literary Terms* (2007) summarises French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss' idea of myth. According to him, Levi-Strauss considers myths as the building blocks governing through structures of collective human existence. He argues that myths are based on oppositions i.e. cultivated versus primitive and human versus divine. Myths are natural as they explain things based on a certain discourse of nature. They are cultural as they have a particular structure. (195)

Eric Gould in his work *Mythical Intentions in Modern Indian Literature (1981)* defines myth as both an "allegory and tautology, reason and unreason, logic and fantasy, waking thought, and dream, atavism and the perennial, archetype and metaphor, origin and end" (05). Myths can bridge these binaries. Myths can be defined as a set of tales, stories believed to have happened and having universal significance that compel compliance with certain codes, rules, rituals, social behaviour, morality, and faith in a particular community or culture. For Malinowski in his *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (2011), myths are an 'indispensable ingredient' of all cultures, which are continually modified and renewed by the modifications of history. He says,

> Mythology serves a crucial role in primitive societies, providing a narrative rebellion against a primordial reality and fulfilling deep religious, moral, and social needs, as well as practical requirements. It operates as an essential component of human civilization, expressing, enhancing, and codifying belief, preserving and enforcing morality, validating ritual efficacy, and providing practical guidance for human conduct. Rather than an idle tale or artistic imagery, myth represents a hard-working and active force, serving as a pragmatic charter for primitive faith and moral wisdom... These stories… are to the narratives a statement of primaeval, greater, and more relevant reality, by which the present life, fates, and activities of mankind are determined, the knowledge of which supplies man with the motive for ritual and moral actions as well as with indications as to how to perform them. (18-19)

Myth though considered literature at one point, has larger implications in contemporary times. It

is continuously being replaced by history – as stories that happened. Even then, myths continue to define and shape literature prominently. Being an integral part of literature, a myth may be retold, elaborated, or discovered with new patterns. It remains an important domain of literature in all cultures. Myths were inherently literary in structure. "Mythology as a total structure, defining as it does, a society's religious beliefs, historical traditions, cosmological speculations, in short, the whole range of its verbal expressiveness is the metric of literature" (Frye, *Myth, Fiction and Displacement,* 600).

Myths are hardly accepted in their original form. They are always interpreted and reinterpreted, codified, and modified to become acceptable. They are always powerful tools to manage society and have helped naturalise social orders. They are used equally powerfully by radical elements. The metaphors and narratives are replete with reflections on the social structure and class dominance in Indian society through the ages. The Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads with their innumerable plots and characters have continued to be the source for innumerable literary works. Their capacity to expose social problems and cultural concerns makes them very vital to the masses.

Mythologies exist in different parts of the world. There exist more than a hundred distinct mythologies that are currently known, including Greek, Roman, Norse, Etruscan, Celtic, Slavic, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Babylonian, Arabian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Chinese just to name a few. Individuals who possess familiarity with multiple global mythologies will recognize striking similarities that exist between them. Nonetheless, acknowledging these commonalities does not seek to downplay the individual cultures' values by glossing over their differences. Each culture rightfully deserves to be celebrated for its distinctive achievements and contributions to humanity.

Following are the five major themes forming the common ground for world mythologies:

1. Creation: from Chaos or Nothingness - Naturally, the most common question early humans tried to answer was how we came into being. How was the world created? According to *Hindu mythology*, in the beginning, only *Vishnu* was there. When *Vishnu* thought about creation, *Brahma* was created from a lotus that came from his navel. It was *Brahma* who finally created the world. A similar pattern of creating the world being out of chaos or a vast, empty, nothingness can be found in the myths of *ancient Babylon* (the *EnûmaEliš* myth), *ancient Greece* (the golden egg laid by *Nyx* or Night), the *Book of Genesis* (*Elohim* creating the heaven and earth in six days), and in *Norse mythology* (the yawning void

named *Ginnungagap*), among numerous others.

2. Sacrifice for Creation - Many cultures have stories about divine figures whose death creates an essential part of reality. In *Indian Vedic Mythology,* the *Purusha Sukta* narrates that all things were made out of the mangled limbs of *Purusha,* a magnified non-natural man, who was sacrificed by gods.

3. The Great Flood - A flood myth is a narrative in which a great flood, usually sent by a deity or deities, destroys civilization, often in an act of divine retribution. In the *Genesis Mythology* of the *Hebrew Bible*, *Yahweh* (God) decides to flood the earth because of the depth of the sinful state of mankind. That is the very source of the term *Noah*'s *Ark*. The *Hindu myth* of *Manu* (found in the *Satapatha Brahmana* and the *Puranas*) is similar to that of *Noah*'s story, though it is less popularly known today.

4. Centre of the World - Many world mythologies mention a place that sits at the centre of the world and acts as a point of contact between different levels of the universe. *Vedic India, ancient China,* and *ancient Germany* all had myths featuring a "Cosmic Tree" whose branches reach heaven and whose roots reach hell. *Mount Meru* is a sacred mountain with five peaks in *Hindu, Jain,* and *Buddhist* cosmology and is considered to be the centre of all the physical, metaphysical, and spiritual universes. *Yggdrasil* is the tree connecting the nine worlds in *Norse cosmology*. In *Greek mythology, Omphalos* stones are considered to be the "navel" of the world.

5. Younger Gods Defeating Older Gods - Many cultures have a creation myth in which a group of younger, more polished gods conquer and struggle against a group of older gods who represent the forces of chaos. It shows that even all those years ago people believed that the young always replace the old, no matter how strong or wise the old are. In *Hindu mythology,* the younger *devas* (gods) battle the older *asuras* (demons). In the *Greek myth* of the *Titanomachy,* the *Olympian* gods defeat the *Titans*, an older and more primitive divine race, and establish cosmic order. Similarly, the *Celtic* gods of life and light struggle against the *Fomorians,* ancient gods of death and darkness.

Hindu mythology is a body of myths found in Hindu texts such as the Vedic literature, epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, the Puranas, and the works in regional literature like the Tamil *Periya Puranam* and *Naalayira Divya Prabandham*, and the *Mangal Kavya* of Bengal. The widely translated popular texts such as the fables of the *Panchatantra* and the *Hitopadesha,* as well as

Southeast Asian texts also embody stories from Hindu mythology. Hindu mythology is a complex subject due to the huge number of gods and goddesses, and their changing role through centuries of Indian spiritual life. Puranic period mythology includes detailed treatment of the central triad (*trideva)* of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, along with dozens of other Gods and Goddesses, nature spirits, half-divine heroes of the epics, and so on. As the earlier writings were examined, the light was indeed contrasted with what came later. The sages of India were not in complete darkness. As Max-Muller says; "The more we go back, the more we examine the earliest germs of a religion, the purer I believe we shall find the conceptions of the Deity." (Wilkins WJ, *Hindu Mythology*, 03)

> In the present day, there is enormous material available for mythology. Each part of the vast area of India has its abundant store of myth and tradition. The Veda, the epics, the Puranas, and the literature of the Buddhists and the Jains, each present data in lavish abundance. Hindu mythology conveys to us a conception of how the Indian pictured to himself the origin of the world and of life, the destiny of the universe and the souls of man, the gods and the evil spirits who supported or menaced his existence. "Gods and demons were very present to the mind of the Indian than as they are today, and they are inseparably involved in innumerable stories of folk-lore, of a fairy tale, and speculation as to the origin of institutions and customs" (Louis Herbert Gray, *The Mythology of All Races*, 23).

The main sources of information with respect to modern Hindu mythology are the two great Epics – the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*, or 'old traditional stories', eighteen in number. There is nothing known about the date of the Epics, beyond the fact that they are later than the Vedas, and earlier than the Puranas. Unlike the Vedas, both the epics and the Puranas may be read by other than Brahmans. Each of these books is of immense bulk, and the same stories frequently reappear in them. Yet they retain a firm hold of the faith and veneration of the mass of the people of India. They believe that whoever reads and repeats this holy life-giving the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*, is liberated from all sins, and dignified with all his posterity to the highest heaven.

Hindu myths have an extended history of resolving all kinds of social, political, and spiritual apprehensions. Hindu myths help in a deeper understanding of mankind as well as instruct and preach about the perfect way of human life. Indian novelists have made ample use of such myths symbolically

and metaphorically. In the last decade, Hindu mythology has crossed the boundary from being limited only to the intelligentsia, to being a part of popular fiction among the youth. A retelling of mythology has been a strong genre in Indian languages. Many Indian writers have tried their hand in this area. Narendra Kohli in Hindi, SL Bhyrappa in Kannada, Shivaji Sawant in Marathi and MT Vasudevan Nair in Malayalam are some leading names. Owing to the dynamic character of Hindu mythologies, every generation interprets it in its own fashion and retells the stories.

Mythology has been at the centre of every civilization; humans have relied on myth to explain religion, history, and morality. Literature evolved from myth and employs similar motifs; writers have often appropriated mythology to create allegories, analogies and metaphors in their works. However, in the English language, it has been relatively a recent phenomenon. The practice of retelling has been brought on by several authors who have made mythology interesting for the masses. The writings of these two authors; Devdutt Pattanaik and Amish Tripathi among them are proposed to be part of this study. Both the writers are seen as the harbingers of change so far as their stories are concerned. The appearance of books by both of them seems to have given a new twist and turn to Hindu mythology.

The first author Dr Devdutt Pattanaik under the proposed study is widely known for his research and simplification of Hindu mythology and his addition of traditional ideas with modern aspects of personal as well as professional life. Dr Devdutt Pattanaik is a household name and was formerly a physician. He later turned into a leadership consultant, author, mythologist and communicator. He has authored over 600 articles and 30 books on religion, mythology and management. He writes regularly for various dailies and magazines.

Dr Pattanaik was born in Mumbai and graduated in Medicine from Grant Medical College, Mumbai. He also studied *Comparative Mythology* at Mumbai University. He has delivered various lectures and presented papers on ideas related to mythology and their relevance to management principles. The concepts and ideas presented in his articles and books are written in simple language. Illustrations are as important as the stories themselves, in his books. The illustrations are deeply rooted in Indian folk art, including *Pattachitra and Chitrakatha* and make his books a visual delight. His television shows – *Business Sutra* and *Shastraarth* on the CNBC channel – focus on drawing out business ideas and concepts from great Indian Epics. Other popular shows include *Devlok with Devdutt*

Pattanaik. He is also an active story consultant and culture consultant for Start TV, Epic and Reliance Industries Limited. Pattanaik was ranked among the top-selling Indian authors in 2014. His book *Devlok* (2016), which was adapted from the television show of the same name, was one of the most popular books of the year 2016.

According to Pattanaik, myth is essential for any society as it helps to establish fundamental concepts such as morality, ethics, and justice. Mythology provides individuals with a framework for understanding the world and making sense of their place in it. As per Pattanaik, each group of people has their own mythology, either reinterpreting older ones or creating new ones to suit their needs. He aims to elevate the goddess Saraswati from darkness to prominence. He believes that Saraswati should have a ubiquitous presence and her influence should be felt everywhere. His works are geared towards making knowledge more accessible and easily understandable. *Olympus: An Indian Retelling of the Greek Myth* (2016), a book by Pattanaik received praise from Neil Gaiman about which he wrote an article titled "Good Omens gives people a different way to imagine what heaven and hell may look like: Neil Gaiman":

> I read a fantastic Indian writer recently who has told Greek myth but from an Indian perspective... He makes it so easy to understand but what is lovely is that he does it from a very proud Indian connection. (The Indian Express. PTI. 31 May 2019, pg.09)

In his book *Myth=Mithya (2006),* Pattanaik described myths constructed over generations which serve as windows to the soul and provide an understanding of the world around us. He fabulously conceptualized a story based on Shiva and Shankara. He also decoded the Phallic Symbol and demonstrated the story about the man who was earlier a woman and other queer stories from the Hindu tradition. The provocative introduction of the story mentions that Ancient Hindu seers knew myth as mithya. He conceptualises well the ancient assumptions of virgin births, flying horses, talking serpents, gods with six heads and demons with eight arms. These are symbolic presentations of the thoughts of truths that need to be conveyed well. The author's concepts are inspired by the revolutionary art and establishment of empires. The book is divided into three parts; Brahma-Sarswati, Vishnu-Lakshmi and Shiva-Shakti. Vedic and Puranic references have been used in a simple and attractive manner while portraying these gods or goddesses. Thus, the author endeavours to untangle the complexity, delving

into the profound meanings behind the diverse stories that encompass the Hindu trinity and their divine consorts. Exploring the enigmatic coexistence of a belief in a singular supreme reality alongside the acknowledgement of 330 million gods, the book elucidates concepts such as pitr, jiva, and the dichotomy between devas and asuras. It elucidates the significance of various rituals while differentiating between seemingly disparate forms of deities like the warrior-like Kali and the benevolent Gauri, revealing their interconnectedness. Furthermore, the author draws comparisons, dissecting the roles and omnipotence of the trinity- Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The text scrutinizes the essence behind the myriad avatars of Vishnu, pondering the significance bestowed upon avatars like Rama and Krishna. Ultimately, the book challenges perceptions, positing the idea that myths might indeed be classified as 'mithya' or subjective reality.

Coming to his book *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata (2010),* Pattanaik presented the recital of the *Mahabharata* systematically in 18 sections and 108 chapters, accompanied by simple yet artistic Madhubani-influenced line drawings and the author's notes and deductions based on scientific and historic facts. The story is narrated by *Astika*, the nephew of *Vasuki*, the kind of Nagas to *Janamejaya*, a descendant of the Pandavas who has ordered the killing of all snakes in his land. The book also includes a summary of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which reduces this complex book for the common man. The narrative style of the author is simple and sharp. He has made comparisons through side notes after every chapter among local folklore from different Indian states as well as versions of the *Mahabharata* from Indonesia. This gives a much deeper perspective on stories which would otherwise have been overlooked. The author intervenes after each story to analyse the situation, activities and scenario to make the readers understand the reason behind the telling of each story. He articulates the evolution of Hindu belief and rituals from the Vedic times to recent history in an eloquent manner.

The author presents a captivating account of the journey of the princes of the Kuru dynasty. In addition to the original Sanskrit *Mahabharata*, the author incorporates characters and stories from various regional variations of epic and folklore. The story is narrated simply, weaving the tales together to create a vivid spectrum of characters and their behaviours, leading to the great battle in Kurukshetra and ending with the Pandavas' journey to the Himalayas and Yudhisthira's victory over himself. The author emphasizes that the repetition of history occurs until humans take heed of their errors, as

highlighted by the remarkable resemblances between the narratives of the Kuru dynasty and their descendants. All characters are depicted with their vices and virtues, making them as human as they are in the epic. The notes at the end of each chapter provide interesting insights into the thought process of the author. The condensed versions of the *Geeta* and *Bhishma's* teachings to Yudhishthira cover all the important points while preserving the meaning intact. The story concludes only after Yudhishthira purges his heart of loathing and hatred for his enemies and learns to treat all humans equally, achieving *Jaya*. Originally named "*Jaya*", the epic later became the *Mahabharata* with the addition of many side stories and tales, truly reflecting the rich, colourful, and intricately woven sphere of Indian life - mirroring happiness and dreams, troubles and turmoil.

Therefore, *Jaya* tells the story of choosing the way of life. As a human being, one has the choice to live by *Matsya Nyay* – the law of the fish where the big fish eat the small fish or *Jangal Nyay* – the law of the jungle where might is right. As humans, we are also blessed with intelligence and the ability to learn and follow "*Dharma*." However, whenever humans have tried to live without *Dharma*, they have destroyed their civilizations with their own hands. Apart from deciphering the symbolism behind Hindu mythology, Pattanaik has included illustrations, photographs, poster art, and blurbs to give readers a visual dimension to the explanation.

In his another work, *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana (2013)*, he has significantly portrayed how the only character in Hindu mythology, a king given the title of *ekam-patni-vrata*, devoted to a single wife, is associated with the most unjust act of abandoning her in the forest to protect family reputation. This seems a deliberate souring of the narrative, made even more complex by Ram's refusal to remarry despite the pressure on royalty to produce an heir. The intention seems to be to provoke the notions of fidelity, property and self-image. And so, the mythologist and illustrator Pattanaik narrates the *Ramayan*, drawing attention through the many oral, visual and written retellings composed at different times by different poets, each one trying to solve the puzzle in his/her own way. This book approaches Ram by speculating on Sita-her childhood with her father, Janak, who hosted sages mentioned in the *Upanishads*; her stay in the forest with her husband who had to be a celibate ascetic while she was in the prime of her youth; her interactions with the women of Lanka, the recipes she exchanged, the emotions they shared with her; her connection with the earth, her mother; her role

as a goddess, the untamed Kali as well as the demure Gauri, in transforming the stoic prince of Ayodhya into a divine being.

The writing style of Pattanaik is very captivating. In this book, Sita is neither Ram's crown nor a victim of Raavan. She is a mighty powerhouse on her own. She is willingly confined within the royal rules she decided to follow. She is learned, lovable, affectionate, dutiful, with a strong sense of reasoning, and is well aware of her capabilities. She is more than willing to accept her destiny and share her credit with her husband. She is complete and wishes to compliment Ram as a dedicated lover. She is the power. Thus, there is a quantity of wisdom and logic in the perspective of Pattanaik in retelling the mythology.

In the book *My Gita (2016),* Pattanaik offers a distinct perspective on the Bhagavad Gita, the revered Hindu scripture. Drawing from his expertise as a renowned mythologist, the book unravels and interprets the essence of 'The Gita', intertwining narratives from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. Departing from the traditional chapter structure of 'The Gita' the author redesigns the text for enhanced reader comprehension without losing its profound essence. While not an exhaustive exploration of every verse, *My Gita* encapsulates the essence of each chapter, presenting a comprehensive overview accessible to newcomers seeking to fathom the vast wisdom within 'The Gita'. This transformative work encapsulates the core teachings of the Gita, capable of altering one's perspectives on life and self. Pattanaik's approach renders this book both inspirational and potentially life-changing, offering readers profound insights. He demystifies The Bhagavad Gita with a fresh approach tailored for modern readers. Rather than a verse-by-verse analysis, he adopts a thematic method, rendering this ancient text remarkably accessible, complemented by his signature illustrations and straightforward diagrams. Amidst today's pervasive inclination towards argumentation and debate, Pattanaik emphasizes Krishna's guidance to Arjuna, steering him toward comprehension rather than judgment within his relationships. This timeless wisdom gains relevance in our current era, characterized by an emphasis on self-centric pursuits- be it self-improvement or self-actualization. In this pursuit, we often overlook our existence within an interconnected network of others, forgetting our capacity to nurture each other through sustenance, affection, and shared significance, even amid conflicts.

Another author of the proposed study is Amish Tripathi, popularly known for his *Shiva Trilogy.*

He has emerged as one of the most sought-after writers of Indian mythology. The Shiva Trilogy comprises of three books: *The Immortals of Meluha (2010), The Secret of the Nagas (2011),* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras (2013).* All three pieces gained immense popularity and cult readership. His next series of *Ramachandra* books are *The Scion of Ikshvaku (2015), Sita: Warrior of Mithila (2017), Raavan: The Enemy of Aryavarta* (2019), *War of Lanka (2022)* and the recently launched *Idols: Unearthing the Power of Murti Puja(2023)*. Born in Mumbai, Tripathi grew up near Rourkela in Odisha. He is an alumnus of St. Xavier's College, Mumbai and the Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata. He has been ranked among the top 100 Indian celebrities four times in a row by Forbes India and was also selected as an Eisenhower Fellow. He is a recipient of multiple awards, including the Raymond Crossword Popular Fiction Award for *The Scion of Ikshvaku* and the Society Young Achievers Award in 2013. He was also noted as the First Literary Pop Star of India in the year 2015.

Tripathi has been rated to mark Hindu mythology as very easy-flowing in his works. He is a stellar storyteller who weaves interesting stories around Hindu mythology. While reading his books is like going on a journey that is both fascinating and enriching. Readers gain a fresh and imaginative perspective on the rich repertoire of Hindu mythology in his works. His mythological fiction conveys ethical philosophy in the guise of a story. He has portrayed the mythological characters as they were in ancient texts but not as seen in modern India. For example, Raavan is seen as purely an evil, villainous, and violent man. But that is not the way he was portrayed in our ancient texts. Raavan has his faults, but he also has his strengths. He kidnapped Sita but kept her in Ashok Vatika and did not take her to his palace without her will. And that is the way Valmiki, the composer of the original Ramayan, also saw him. He depicted Raavan as the master of the Vedas, the arts and ways of *Kshatriyas* and also as an excellent *veena* player. Thus, he has written with a different interpretation of myths along with explaining the fundamentals of Indian philosophy, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and the concepts of karma-dharma, and atman-brahman, in a simple manner. He narrates mythological stories with explanations to make modern readers believe in them.

Tripathi has delineated Lord Shiva's life very effectively through his book *The Immortals of Meluha (2010)*. He described effectually how Shiva was a common man like everybody else, living a rural life, and how destiny had something else in store for him. This is the story of a legendary man who

is a Tibetan tribal chief. He is fierce and hates frequent fights and wars and has the quality to decide quickly between good and bad, virtuous and evil, right and wrong. *The Immortals of Meluha* follows the journey of a man who is destined to become the destroyer of evil. Shiva and his tribe lived at Mount Kailash until their rivalry with the *Pakrati* tribe forced them to migrate to Meluha, a place where the people are followers of Lord Ram and are known as *Suryavanshis*. This place is considered a heavenly peaceful society. The Meluhans are seeking a messiah who can save them from their arch-enemies, the *Chandravanshis*, and Shiva is the chosen one, known as the *Neelkanth*. However, Shiva is reluctant to believe in prophecies and does not think he is the right person for the job. His past is also hindering him from acknowledging his destiny. His love for Sati, the daughter of Emperor Daksha, causes him to defy the age-old traditions of the *Vikarma* people, who are punished in their present life for the sins of their past life. With the expectations of the *Suryavanshis* weighing heavily on him, everything becomes overwhelming for Shiva. His friends helped him to see the truth and are ready to die for their *Neelkanth*.

Emperor Daksha of Meluha declared war due to the increasing terrorist attacks by *Nagas* and *Chandravanshis*. Shiva, as the leader of the army, initially fought with a sense of vengeance but later realized his mistakes. He understood the importance of considering the other side's perspective and embarked on a journey where his destination was far from clear. As the destroyer of evil, he learned that his path was not just about defeating his enemies but also about understanding them. The author narrated the story as a perfect blend of modern-day technologies and as a Hindu mythological legend. Every character is described in an informative manner. Whether it is a war sequence or a simple conversation, Tripathi creates a world of fantasy including corruption, a caste system and unnecessary laws. It is also observed that Tripathi has tried to change the whole concept of God in the book. God according to him is a human being, who has been destined to follow his journey as a leader, to fight the war of good versus evil. There he becomes God in the eyes of his followers. This whole new light on Shiva, The Destroyer God, is a significant contribution of Tripathi.

The second book by Amish Tripathi in the Shiva Trilogy is *The Secret of the Nagas (2011)*. This instalment continues the fascinating journey of Shiva, the Tibetan tribal leader who is believed to be the legendary Neelkanth, the saviour of the land of Meluha. In the book, Shiva continues his quest to unravel the mystery behind the sinister Nagas, a group of deformed individuals who have been feared and hated

by society. As Shiva seeks to understand the truth behind the Nagas and their involvement in the ongoing conflict, he discovers that things are not as black and white as they seem. The lines between good and evil blur, and he encounters unexpected allies and adversaries. Thus, the story takes readers on a thrilling adventure, delving deeper into the richly imagined world created by Tripathi. With its blend of action, philosophy, and mythology, the book keeps readers engaged as Shiva navigates through political intrigues, battles, and personal challenges. Themes of loyalty, sacrifice, and the complexity of moral choices are intricately woven into the narrative. Tripathi's skilful storytelling and his unique reimagining of ancient legends make *The Secret of the Nagas* a compelling read, leaving readers eager to uncover more secrets and revelations in the concluding book of the trilogy.

The Oath of the Vayuputras (2013) by Tripathi is a gripping conclusion to the Shiva Trilogy. In this final instalment, the narrative reaches its zenith as Shiva, the Neelkanth. Neelkanth faces his ultimate destiny here. The book seamlessly weaves together action, philosophy, and mythology, drawing readers into a world where god and mortal collide. His skilful storytelling shines as he navigates through intricate plotlines, unravelling mysteries and tying up loose ends from the previous books. The characters are vividly depicted, showcasing their growth and resilience in the face of adversity. Moreover, the author's interpretation of mythological elements and incorporation of dilemmas add depth and relevance to the tale. The pace of the narrative is relentless, keeping readers on the edge of their seats with its twists and turns. While the book provides a satisfying conclusion to the series, it also raises thought-provoking questions about destiny, duty, and the nature of good and evil. Thus, *The Oath of the Vayuputras* is a fitting finale to a remarkable trilogy. It captivates with its blend of mythology and fiction, leaving a lasting impact on readers long after the final page is turned.

Another work of Tripathi *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* (2017) unlike in more traditional retellings of the Ramayana, is a warrior princess who proves herself as an able administrator and strategist. He has successfully created a world that is much more than mere mystical or magical; it is a world that is intricate and dramatic, and most of all, infused with humanity. This is a retelling of the myth from Sita's perspective.

In his book, Sita is a warrior princess, abandoned as an infant, and adopted by King Janak and his wife Sunaina as their heir. Sita's marksmanship surpasses the skills of her male peers. A precocious child,

she goes on to prove herself as an able administrator and strategist. The author projects her as a feminist force to fight the perils that plagued the country at that time and resurrect the glories of the subcontinent. Also, strong precedents have been set by the queen within the book. Sita's pragmatism has been credited to her mother, who ran the kingdom while Janak was immersed in philosophy with no real concern for his kingdom. Another important force in the story is Samichi, an orphan rescued from the slums of Mithila who saves Sita's life and becomes her companion and caretaker.

Much of the plot is woven into an elaborate tale crafted out of the friendship and subsequent animosity between Vashishtha and Vishvamitra, who are leaders of the Vayuputra and Malayputra tribes respectively. They are tasked with finding the next Vishnu or saviour who will chart the country's path to safety. Light is also thrown upon matters of governance, leadership, equality, freedom and justice in the conversation of Sita with Vishvamitra. They deliberate on the matters of dispute resolution, money hoarding and the caste system. Tripathi crafted a trick by getting sages and other revered characters of Hindu myth to provide a running commentary on the contemporary social landscape of India. In this way, even the more radical ideas (like Vishwamitra suggesting to surrender of children for state adoption by all birth parents) go unquestioned. Ram enters the story much later and a partnership of equals between him and Sita becomes necessary to carry out their duties as the chosen Vishnus. The author portrayed Sita who is not submissive or overtly dependent on her husband to validate her existence. Hence, there is a consistency of theme in Sita, where the eponymous character is an abandoned child.

Literature Review reveals that in Indian English literature, mythology has always given creative impetus to the authors over the ages. The accumulated meaning and depth of myth shape the significance of a literary work. Myth and legends provide a wide range of scope for inspiration. Faith in the myth enables a writer to choose several elements from it and use them for the purpose. In March 2020, the International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR) published a research article by Sneha Tripathi from the LJ Institute of Applied Science, Ahmadabad. The article discussed Devdutt Pattanaik's exploration of myth and presented various types of retellings and interpretations adopted by him. It also deals with an investigation of Indian myths, philosophy, mythological characters and culture associating them with a common understanding of the world that binds individuals and communities together.

In May 2021, a research article "Retelling Indian Mythology through the Novels of Devdutt

Pattanaik" by K Bhawani of Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies, Chennai was published in the Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TJCME). She mentioned that his retellings of the ancient epics are retouched with the same grandeur and value. These retellings brought back the myths to cherish them for future generations. Moreover, these folklores and myths also have answers to many unsolved puzzles, like; laws of karma, nature's connection with mankind and many more. A Research Paper "Retellings in Indian Mythology with Special Reference to Sita a Book by Devdutt Pattanaik" by Sanika Kulkarni from Tilak Vidyapeeth, Maharashtra indicated that the author has carefully analysed and reinterpreted his favourite mythical characters by adopting them in their specific dialogue. She also described that Pattanaik retells the epic from Sita's perspective enlisting all the interpretations of the *Ramayana* like an encyclopaedia.

A book *'Duryodhana'* (2014) by V Raghunathan delves into the deviousness, obstinacy, and greed for power that drove Duryodhana to initiate the battle of Kurukshetra between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, ultimately leading to his downfall. The author explores the many shades of grey that make up the villainous character of the *Mahabharata.* Also, another book '*Duryodhana*' by Kaka Vidhate translated in English from Marathi by Vikrant Pande in 2020 wherein Vidhate reimagines the enduring tale of the *Mahabharata* and described his protagonist as an enigmatic life force that shook and overwhelmed many a statesman and warrior. He peels back layers upon layers to reveal unknown facets of the character.

Vikram Singh, a research scholar, published an article titled "Rewriting Myth: A Critical Analysis of Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy" in the International Research Journal of Management Sociology & Humanity (IRJMSH) in 2016. The article examined how mythical stories have inspired readers and writers for generations and how they are being reimagined and blended with modern culture.

Vijaya S. Prabavati, a PhD scholar from ST Hindu College, Nagercoil affiliated to MS University, Tirunelveli in a published article titled "Recreation of Myth in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*" in the Journal of Xi'an University of Architecture & Technology in April 2020 described the facts regarding recreating the myth related to Hindu God Shiva by mixing it with scientific facts and social fantasies. In 2018, a research paper entitled "Magical Realism in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy – More Real Than Reality" by R. Pragadeeswaran was published in the *International Journal of English Language,*

enumerated the area of magical realism in Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* leaving the space for the scholars about motifs and techniques used in the work.

In January 2018, the International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT) published an article by Rubee Gupta, a research scholar from Jiwaji University, Gwalior, titled "An Astonishing Form of Sita in Sita: Warrior of Mithila". The article explores how the character of Sita in the book is depicted as both physically and intellectually strong. She is shown as a warrior rather than a damsel in distress. She discusses that equality, the caste system, and agitations are also a part of the novel. In another research article "Voice of Sita in Sita: Warrior of Mithila" by Arathy A Nair, a research scholar from Amrita School of Arts and Science, Kochi published in the Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR) in 2022 which analyses how Sita is differentiated as a powerful, voiced warrior, as opposed to the customary depiction. She discussed that Tripathi upholds the role of Sita in the age-old epic, from a mere subject of destiny to the master who controls events in the story.

Thus, the above literature survey reveals that Hindu mythological works need more attention from researchers to prove that Indian writers can be at par with their Western counterparts. None of the above studies dived deep into the areas of motifs and techniques used by both the authors in their retellings of Hindu mythology.

The literature review also shows that only a few books and commentaries have been written on selected works of Hindu mythology from new and different perspectives but in-depth comparative research of the works of these two young Indian authors has not been carried out so far. Though works have been done on Indian mythological fiction separately yet a comparative perspective has not been attempted till now. The proposed study not only relates the authors' perspectives with conventional mythology but also proposes to compare and contrast the motifs and techniques used in its representation in Indian English literature. In the process of comparative analysis, the dimensions of different perspectives will also be investigated. It is hoped that the proposed study will open up new vistas of research in interdisciplinary and mythological studies.

The proposed study would also focus on examining how these texts embody divergent attitudes towards the characters and incidents in Hindu Mythology; how these ancient texts reinterpret the mythical past; and how the respective authors utilize myths creatively to come to terms with the

predicament of the present.

A comparative study of motifs and techniques used in the works of Devdutt Pattanaik and Amish Tripathi may yield interesting results. The objectives of the study, therefore, would be:

1. To study the basic aspects of Hindu mythology, its meaning and scope.
2. To make a thematic study of the selected novels of Devdutt Pattanaik and Amish Tripathi.
3. To study the narrative techniques of the works of both the writers selected for the study.
4. To attempt a comparative study of both the writers with reference to their selected work.

Based on the aforementioned objectives, the tentative division of chapters for the study would be as follows:

Chapter 1 - Introduction

(a) Myth and Mythology

(b) Mythology and Literature

(c) Making of the Writers

Chapter 2 - The World Through the Prism of Myth: A Study in Selected Works of Devdutt Pattanaik

Chapter 3 - The Philosopher Mythologist: A Study in Selected Works of Amish Tripathi

Chapter 4 - The Art of the Narration

Chapter 5 - The Comparative Study of Works of both the Writers

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

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